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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 000881

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/INSB

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KIRF](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [IN](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: TERRORIST THREATENING CHRISTIANS ARRESTED

REF: A. KATHMANDU 871

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 741

[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 440

KATHMANDU 00000881 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Jeffrey A. Moon. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The leader of the Nepal Defense Army (NDA), Ram Prasad Mainali, was arrested on September 5 in the eastern Terai district of Morang. The NDA is a Hindu extremist organization that gained prominence over the past couple of years for attacks against Christians as well as Muslims and political targets. Following the bombing of a Catholic church near Kathmandu on May 23, which killed three people, several Christian churches began paying "protection" money to the NDA. The NDA has not staged any attacks since Mainali's arrest. Previous attacks did not specifically target U.S. or other Western residents in Nepal. End summary.

#### Police Arrest Extremist Leader

[1](#)2. (C) Police in the eastern Terai district of Morang arrested Ram Prasad Mainali, the leader of the Nepal Defense Army, on September 5. A number of police contacts noted the arrest of Mainali, who headed the Hindu extremist organization responsible for a series of attacks against Christian, Muslim, and political party targets, was an example of the crackdown on crime Home Minister Bhim Rawal spurred with the special security plan he introduced in late July (Refs A and B). SP Dependra Subedi, District Police Chief of Morang, told post's Senior Law Enforcement Advisor on September 18 that the NDA leader's arrest was a well-planned operation. Subedi had led the surveillance and use of confidential informants to pinpoint Mainali's location and timing for the raid. The police chief was proud his team was able to capture Mainali and several accomplices without the use of deadly force.

[1](#)3. (C) Police contacts, including Kuber Singh Rana, DIG in Major Crimes Unit, and SSP Surendra Shah, had initially declined to comment on the arrest beyond confirming media reports because they did not want to draw attention to a previously bungled attempt to detain Mainali. The police privately admitted that Mainali, who was arrested in

Kathmandu in August 2007 on charges of carrying guns and explosives and released on bail in December 2007, should have remained in custody. Former Home Minister Krishna Sitaula had used his influence to get Mainali bonded, and the Attorney General did not follow up on the case during Maoist-led government. Police contacts did not want the fact that Mainali should have been on trial or in jail during the recent string of attacks brought into public discussion. Nevertheless, they were happy to consider the arrest of Mainali and other criminal and extremist leaders a direct success of the special security plan.

#### Background of the Nepal Defense Army

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¶4. (SBU) According to police contacts, the NDA (previously the Hindu Defense Army) began as an underground wing of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, a republican party with royalist leanings. Ram Prasad Mainali (aka Paribartan Giri aka Phanindra), age 46, took over the NDA and gave it its current direction in 2007. An active Maoist cadre from 1996 - 2001, Mainali temporarily relocated to India in 2001 and was a member of the Hindu chauvinist party Shiv Sena. Mainali claimed in a Nepali media interview to be an ex-policeman with a following of 1,200 former cops, soldiers, and people victimized by the Maoists. Most of the NDA influence is in the eastern Terai with alleged support from "Indian elements," according to an Embassy contact affiliated with a church in Kathmandu.

¶5. (SBU) A leaflet allegedly circulated by the NDA Central Command asserts the group strives to discard the secular state in favor of a Hindu nation with a constitution that reflects Hindu beliefs. Residents of Nepal would abide by "Hindu law". Non-Hindus would have limited religious

KATHMANDU 00000881 002.2 OF 003

freedom. Anti-nationalist or anti-India activities would not be tolerated -- the manifesto rants against "brokers of terrorist organizations" such as the United States and Pakistan. The group claims to have a "suicide squad" to help Hindus who face problems "in any part of the world." The NDA also professes to promote Dalit ("Untouchable") education, rights, and integration into society.

#### Threats and Extortion

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¶6. (C) Following its attack against a Catholic church in the Kathmandu Valley on May 23 (Ref C), which killed three and injured more than a dozen, the NDA made a series of public threats against Nepalese Christians. Shortly after the bombing, Mainali gave an interview to local newspapers in the eastern Terai in which he issued an ultimatum for "all" Christians to leave Nepal within 30 days, or the NDA would carry out more attacks. (Note: Church leaders believe the threat pertained only to Nepalese Christians; there was no mention of any threats to foreigners. There are approximately 400,000 Christians in Nepal. End note.) The NDA did not conduct additional attacks against religious targets, but they coerced Christian groups to pay money to remain safe. Father Lawrence Maniyar, a Jesuit priest, announced to the press in mid-June, "Church officials have been receiving extortion calls from the NDA. While the Catholic churches have refused to pay, there are reports of smaller Protestant churches outside of Kathmandu, where security is far less, raising money to appease them." Mukti Suvedi of Caritas Nepal told Emboff on August 28 that the NDA had actually begun targeting Catholic churches for money after the NDA claimed responsibility for the murder of a Jesuit priest in July 2008. Suvedi said Catholic leaders maintained their refusal to pay and had pushed the Prime Minister and Home Minister to prevent NDA extortion threats. Other Embassy contacts, including Amcits, affiliated with Christian groups in Kathmandu confirmed several Protestant churches paid "protection" money to the NDA after the Catholic church bombing.

17. (C) On September 23, Suvedi told Emboff that to his knowledge, the NDA has not approached churches for money since the arrest of Mainali.

#### Attacks

18. (SBU) The NDA threats were increasingly focused against Christians, but Nepal's Muslim community -- four percent of the total population -- were also victims. The NDA has claimed responsibility for several attacks over the past two years, including bombings of two mosques in Morang district in the eastern Terai that killed two people in 2008. The group took credit for:

- August 11: small bomb at the Nepali Congress party office in Kathmandu; no casualties; on the same evening, police diffused another bomb at the Transportation Management Department in Lalitpur, just south of Kathmandu;
- May 23: three killed and more than a dozen injured when a woman planted a bomb at a Catholic church in Lalitpur; NDA leaflets found at site;
- July 2008: shooting death of a Catholic priest in Dharan, eastern Nepal;
- January 2008: eight injured in Kathmandu when a bomb was thrown into the road following a multi-party rally to launch campaigning for the Constituent Assembly election;
- May 2007 - small bomb at Maoist party office; no casualties;
- March 2007 - small bomb at Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist-Leninist party office; no casualties.

#### Comment

19. (C) The NDA never specifically targeted U.S. or other Western residents in Nepal, but the bombing of the Catholic church attracted widespread media attention that led to fears that the NDA or another group would focus future attacks on Kathmandu for maximum political impact, increasing the risk to foreign travelers and residents. On July 27, post issued

KATHMANDU 00000881 003 OF 003

a warden message about the NDA's threats toward those perceived to be conducting religious outreach, reminding Americans in Nepal to be vigilant about security and to avoid large gatherings. The arrest of Mainali -- another event that garnered widespread media attention -- indicates the Home Minister's special plan has had a positive impact on security. The NDA has a strongly-worded manifesto but, like most of the 100 or so armed groups operating in Nepal, appears more interested in extorting money than promoting its ideology -- a practice that reportedly has stopped following the arrest of its leader. Whether the organization is willing or able to regroup remains to be seen.

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